

IOWAccess Citizen Council

June 19, 1998, 10:00 a.m.

*Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Emmetsburg,
Orange City, Shenandoah, Spencer*

Members Present

Carol French Johnson, *Chair*
Diane Kolmer
David Nixon
Richard Reitsma
Abbi Swanson
Gordon Wigness
Jim Yenck

Guests

Roger Bair, *Iowa State University (Project 6)*
Ann Hendricks, *American Computer Services (Project 7)*
Beth Danowsky, *Rural Development Council*
Kent Hiller, *Iowa Interactive*
Sandy Koppen, *Cedar Rapids United Way (Project 13)*
Jeff Veverka, *American Computer Services (Project 7)*
Rick Wyatt, *American Computer Services (Project 7)*
Jim Youngblood, *State of Iowa - Information Technology Services*

Staff

Amy Campbell, *State Public Policy Group*
Arlinda McKeen, *State Public Policy Group*
Linda Plazak, *State of Iowa - Information Technology Services*

Welcome & Introductions

Carol French Johnson welcomed everyone, and asked everyone to introduce themselves for the benefit of those at remote sites

Johnson welcomed Jim Youngblood, Director of ITS and Chair of the IOWAccess Steering Committee, to the meeting. Youngblood discussed the Executive Order recently signed by the Governor, and its implications to the IOWAccess Steering Committee. The Executive Order creates an IOWAccess Advisory Council, which will replace the IOWAccess Steering Committee when the federal projects have been completed (September or October). The IOWAccess network will go forward after the federal projects have been completed, under the leadership of ITS and the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will include representation from local

government, all branches of state government, various associations (banking and news media), and citizens. The Advisory Council will have its first meeting later this summer, probably in August.

Youngblood noted that he expects the Citizen Council to have an ongoing role, despite the phasing out of the Steering Committee and the phasing in of the Advisory Council. The Citizen Council provides a valuable perspective to IOWAccess, and that should be preserved. However, the role may be more informal.

Linda Plazak introduced Kent Hiller, General Manager of Iowa Interactive (Project 1). Hiller provided an overview of the network, and added that Iowa Interactive now has an office in Des Moines and five staff in place. Hiller anticipates that the Network will be on-line in mid-July, and noted that all but two pieces of hardware have been received. Connectivity and security issues have been addressed, and Iowa Interactive staff have been busy meeting with project teams to link with each to provide the overall website architecture. Hiller has also been helping ITS put together the Advisory Council, and has had great reception by the groups contacted.

Demonstration — Project 6 (Online Housing & Finance Information)

Roger Bair, the ISU contractor working on project 6, demonstrated the online housing and finance information system. Bair noted that the team performed an extensive survey of over 500 institutions to gather information for the database, which includes information on everything from disabled and elderly housing to first-time homebuyer information.

An individual entering the system can search by city, income, or other field - or create a more specific search by entering some personal information such as city, upper family income (because many programs are based on income), number of family members, and specific profile data (rural resident, elderly, disabled). Users have the option to choose all or any of the profiles and personal data for a broader search.

After entering this information, the system lets the user double check the personal data and profile information entered. Once the information is verified, the system lists the programs for which the user qualifies. These programs are linked to the appropriate program pages.

Bair noted that the team and ISU are looking for ways to include information on homeless programs in the system, with appropriate referrals noted. The team is currently considering ways to market the system. ISU Extension Service will create brochures and informational materials for use in marketing the system. The team plans to send these brochures to its partners in this project (the institutions and agencies that responded to the survey). The database now has over 500 entries, and Bair readily admitted that the team has barely scratched the surface.

Until now, there has been no data repository for this kind of information. Any person can use this — consumers, financial institutions, realtors, or a human resources person.

Bair added that the team continues to look for more user-friendly interfaces, and has purposely kept graphics small so the system is fast and can be accessed by any type of computer equipment.

Other links in the system are still not complete – the team has finished the finance portion of the database and is now working on the home ownership, remodeling, and counseling sections. The team is looking at including other links which give consumer information, such as increasing your home's energy efficiency. For those wishing to look at this draft system, you can access it at <http://pv8e3a.vincent.iastate.edu.IA>

The Citizen Council asked the following questions about the system:

1. Are there links to the realtors home search database, or any realtor pages? *Bair explained that the team wanted to make sure the site did not become commercial, so a realtor link was not included.*

The Citizen Council made the following comments about the system:

1. The system is very simple and user-friendly, and loaded quickly (even with the modem connection used for the demonstration).
2. The system will be of great value to the citizen, and is very well-designed.

Demonstration — Project 7 (Online Business License & Information Center/Professional Licensing)

Jeff Veverka of American Computer Services, the contractor for project 7, presented the conceptual design and purpose of the Business License Information Center. Veverka gave a general overview of the project, with the goal to provide citizens with a single point of access to start a business.

The system will include appropriate agency contact information, what a person needs to start a specific type of business, and point them to the appropriate contacts. The system will serve all modes of communication, and will be accessible by Internet, phone, mail, and fax-back.

Veverka noted that the system is currently a very fragmented, multi-step process. The Business License Information Center (BLIC) will take care of the interagency communication, so the user only needs to contact a single point for their first contact with government. This is a first-stop system, which streamlines the process of permitting and licensing for a business start-up or existing business.

The goal of this project is to make all communications electronic — the user enters information on an electronic form, and enters credit card information to take care of payments. Veverka noted that the system will not be fully operational until the state recognizes digital signatures, and develops a good security system for electronic commerce. Veverka noted that Iowa Interactive will be taking care of the security platform for electronic commerce transactions.

Veverka stated that the system is seamless, and eliminates steps for a person using the system. The system navigates the hierarchy of state agencies, instead of the user. To best understand what the system does, it is important to understand the current process, and the re-engineered process.

Current Process — Citizens contact IDED via phone or e-mail, a packet of state licenses is sent to the requestor, the citizen must then determine what licenses and permits they need, and it is up to this person to contact each agency for the various permits and licenses they need (including sales tax, liquor license, environmental permits, corporate documents). The citizen contacts each agency, is mailed a form by each agency, fills out each form, and mails the forms back separately to each agency. IDED's current process is manual, and based on mailing and copying, and information is not always updated.

New Process — Customers may contact the BLIC via phone/mail/fax/Internet, whichever they are most comfortable doing. They will enter information about themselves and the business they are starting up or expanding. The person will receive a list of licenses specific to the type of business, which triggers an automated application process. At the customer's request, the information is sent directly to the agencies listed, and is placed in a central IDED tracking system for use in follow-up help to businesses. The agencies then respond either electronically, by mail, or by fax, depending on how the person wants to be contacted. The process no longer requires the person to do all the legwork — the system does the legwork for them.

Veverka noted that the Internet piece will be done by Iowa Interactive. Rick Wyatt demonstrated two processes, the Citizen Request and Agency Survey process which keeps information up to date. Wyatt noted that the team was not seeing the web site, or what the users will see. The demonstration depicted the process, what is behind the web site.

The system uses the new North American Industrial Classification System for business and industry. Digital signatures continue to be an issue that must be addressed before many applications can be added to the system, including the professional licensure portion. Veverka noted that IDED needs to work with other state agencies to make sure the responses occur and the process for notifying IDED and the citizen is occurring.

The Citizen Council asked the following questions about the system:

1. Will you be working with Chambers of Commerce for the roll-out?
Yes, that is an important part.
2. How will you update information?
It has been very time consuming to get information, and there is no repository for this type of information. Now, this information will always come from one source, and information will be centralized. IDED is going to add a staff person to make sure that the information is kept up-to-date. IDED will take ownership of the page to keep information updated.

3. How will the person know how to specifically ask the question? How will they know if you are classified as fast food, full-service?
There are prompts for more specific information. There will be built-in yes/no questions that will help a person narrow their scope.
4. DHS currently has huge bound books of information which detail what is required to be a human services provider. Will this information be eventually included in this system?
If not immediately, there are plans to get this information on the system. The IDED staff person assigned to this system needs to identify next steps. Realistically, it is possible to add about 30 licenses each time to make the growth manageable. The team and IDED need to set priorities for expansion and further integration.
5. Where is the project at, in terms of completion?
Testing technology; working on technical documentation and online help; collecting information on both the business and professional licensing components; working with Kent Hiller for Internet interface; and installing hardware and software on IDED servers.
6. Will you have contact via hyperlink?
No, the BLIC will simply forward information on to the appropriate agencies. The notice will ask the agency to send specific information to the user, either via e-mail or mail. The system can not become more automated until all agencies have agreed to participate, and respond within certain timeframes.

The Citizen Council made the following comments about the system:

1. The system needs to be very specific, so that a person receives an accurate list of licenses and permits needed.
2. The system should help narrow the scope for persons that may not know they are a "full service restaurant" or the degrees of liquor licenses. The system needs to incorporate "drill down" menus to help narrow the scope.
3. This system is extremely valuable to the public and to businesses, and should be very user-friendly.
4. Need to work with chambers and other local groups in the roll-out.
5. Need to try to automate this as much as possible – the focus needs to be on getting agencies to work together to make this system work. Agencies need to participate, so the citizen can get everything they need through this system.
6. Government is in the process of a real cultural change - so we need to take gradual steps that start where there is the best return on investment. This will take some time, but the BLIC needs to establish those goals.

Demonstration — Project 13 (Community Resource Directory)

Sandy Koppen, a project 13 team member with the United Way in Cedar Rapids, demonstrated Galileo, the Community Resource Directory. This system will allow citizens to obtain a wealth of information from community access points. Information on the system ranges from recreational summer programs to food stamps to adult day care to child care to housing. Community access points are in accessible sites like family resource centers.

Koppen noted that the software for the system is not completely developed, but about 70% of the data has been integrated into the database, and the team is starting on the 5th grade literacy translation.

Koppen toured the system online, demonstrating how the “Resource House” works. The software does not allow a person to jump around the Internet once inside the system, so access is confined to public access sites.

Koppen emphasized that the system was designed to make filling out information in the system fun. “Benny the Biographer” takes an individual’s personal information, while “Marion the Librarian” provides a listing of all the information included in the system. “Margaret the Matchmaker” is the search engine which matches your personal needs with information in the system, and “Hermes the Winged Messenger” e-mails your comments to the appropriate agency.

Koppen noted that there are many ways to navigate the system. The sign-in desk allows an individual to develop a password to secure confidential information — and there is no way to access that password again. Passwords are only known by the user. If a password is lost, the user must re-enter their data.

Once a person is “registered” in the system, that person can send and receive e-mail with their personal password. Information requested by the user is deposited in their personal mailbox.

Koppen demonstrated “Marion the Librarian,” which allows an individual to choose the geographic area to be covered in a search (county or city), and the menu of items available. The menu is a drill down option. Koppen noted that some sites will have touch screen access. Next, Koppen demonstrated the “Communications Center,” and walked through several resource directory applications.

Agencies may directly submit and update information by obtaining a sign-on authorization through the I&R. This I&R managed sign-on ensures that access is given only to legitimate agencies. For those not at the meeting, the DRAFT version of the Galileo system can be viewed at the following web site: www.croad.com/client/project13/index.html

The Citizen Council asked the following questions about the system:

1. Is this a two-level system?

Yes, this system has two levels, a professional version for providers and a consumer version for the general public.

2. Do you have information about how well “Marion” and “Margaret” have tested with the computer illiterate? Do you have supportive information for this nomenclature?
Partially, there were some focus groups conducted in Miami housing developments and with citizen groups around the country. These focus groups asked what kinds of things would make it more comfortable to use the Internet.
3. Where are community sites?
The team is currently planning for 21 sites in the community – 15 will receive equipment through this project and the others will provide their own hardware. The sites are in five family resource centers, an elementary school, an alternative high school, three community college campuses, several helping agencies, a police station, and a library.
4. Will training be available for people working at or staffing the access sites?
Yes, the team plans to conduct “train the trainers” sessions, and have been meeting monthly to help begin this training. The team plans to continue this monthly training.
5. Are sites dedicated computers? Who will maintain?
Yes, the computers are dedicated at each of 15 sites purchased through IOWAccess. The team has yet to resolve the maintenance issues. Each hub site will work with pilots to help use software and training, and Northlight will respond with updates and maintenance of software.
6. Will you have an assessment once in the field? Will the Citizen Council comments be taken into consideration, and can the software be reformatted to reflect these comments?
The team needs to answer this.
7. Are you planning on selecting a group of clients to work with in the evaluation of this system? Do you plan on demonstrating this to any focus groups? Have agency staff members given any feedback?
There are questions built into the exit interview on software, and the system can track and determine the type of activity happening on the site (for instance, the number of people that entered the system and the percent that completed the exit interview, sent information to an agency, sent e-mail).
8. Will you capture levels of exits (when people leave the system)?
Unsure. Northlight needs to respond to this issue. The system will be able to register the number of hits on each web site, and the only way to get out is to click the finish button. Of course, the individual does not have to fill out the exit questionnaire.

The Citizen Council made the following comments about the system:

1. The system needs to provide immediate results to users — users of this system will not get information immediately and will have to wait or return to access this information.
2. The system seems to be slower than traditional service delivery. A person can walk into an agency and get information immediately, or go online and wait a day or two.

3. The system is far too complicated and has too many screens — it was hard to follow and will be hard for others to follow as well. As designed, each site will need staff to help walk people through the many screens, fairly intensive guides, and a powerful search engine.
4. The system is too graphically complex and slow for use on many computers.
5. Nomenclature is insulting and patronizing.
6. No Iowa focus groups were conducted to test the look and feel of this system.
7. This system is extremely important component of IOWAccess, and of great value to the general public as well as agencies that work to provides services to the public.
8. The conceptual framework is good, but the way it is presented seems to be too confusing.

Discussion of Citizen Council's Role in IOWAccess Outreach Efforts

Amy Campbell discussed the progress made on the marketing and outreach plans for IOWAccess. Both plans will be finalized soon, following input from Citizen Council members. Tamara Dukes has recently joined Iowa Interactive, and will be heading up their marketing efforts. SPPG plans to work with Iowa Interactive to develop an appropriate outreach plan that complements the marketing strategy developed by Dukes.

Campbell identified the key constituencies to be targeted in the outreach plan, including professional associations, the business community, libraries and the general public, government organizations, and the educational community. Targeted materials to be developed include meeting packets, media packets, guest editorials, letters to editors, targeted letters, presentation materials, leave-behind pieces, and statements for use in community forums.

SPPG plans to develop a "Speakers' Bureau" to engage IOWAccess participants in local meetings and meetings with various organizations. IOWAccess participants will be asked to be ambassadors for the network, carrying its message to Iowans. SPPG will send out a form asking each person if they are willing to speak about IOWAccess, where geographically they are willing to speak, and to which groups they are willing to make presentations.

Marketing and outreach plans will be distributed to Citizens Council once they are finalized. Campbell asked for suggestions on the types of groups and organizations that should be contacted or targeted in these plans.

Kolmer suggested that legislators be included as a target audience for the outreach effort. Plazak noted that the Executive Director of the Bar Association suggested legislators be included in any IOWAccess outreach program. IOWAccess participants might want to host some legislative coffees (small groups of legislators) now, while legislature is not in session. Campbell noted that the legislative portion of the outreach would be conducted by Tom Shephard, ITS's legislative liaison.

Carol French Johnson volunteered to be a part of the Speakers Bureau, and added that the Iowa Library Association has their Fall conference in October. This would be an opportunity for IOWAccess to display its projects.

Beth Danowsky, Executive Director of the Rural Development Council, offered to be a resource to the Advisory Council and suggested that IOWAccess present at the August 10 RDC Meeting.

It was noted that presenters really need to be able to show people things in order to be effective in outreach. There will be some applicable applications ready to show beginning in July. Campbell added that some outreach has already begun, through exhibits and speaking at events. To date, IOWAccess has presented at an Iowa State Association of Counties (ISAC) conference, an Iowa County Treasurer's Association conference, the Iowa Bar Association, the Judges Association, Rotary clubs, and others. IOWAccess has exhibited at the Iowa League of Cities conference, an ISAC conference, the Infolowa conference, the Iowa Bar Association, and at the Judges Association.

Abby Swanson emphasized the need to include the Governor, as he ends his tenure. Campbell added that the outreach plan calls for educating the two gubernatorial candidates and the two Secretary of State candidates about IOWAccess.

Campbell outlined the draft of the final report format. This will guide project teams in developing their reports in September. It includes the base information that will be required by the federal funders at the close of the projects. Project leads, the steering committee, and citizen council have all been asked to provide input on evaluation criteria for the projects. Citizen Council members were asked to submit any additional criteria for consideration prior to July 9.

Kolmer asked if there is a way to quantify the new process vs. the old process, to demonstrate what IOWAccess has done for them in efficiency, consumer satisfaction, and product development. Kolmer asked that this be included in the evaluation criteria.

Discussion on Issues of Concern for the Citizen Council

Johnson noted that, as important as it is to have representation from around the state, ITS should consider reconstituting the Citizen Council to ensure better participation. Johnson suggested that if the decision is made to continue the Citizen Council, ITS should thank all the members of the Council and start over with a more manageably sized group of people that are very interested in IOWAccess. Johnson also asked that ITS consider not using the ICN for meetings, because it limits participation that is needed in healthy discussions.

Youngblood thanked Johnson for her comments, and agreed with the observations. Youngblood noted that it is very important to have a Citizen Council to address issues such as ADA accessibility and confidentiality. The Citizen Council needs to be a "watchdog" and respond to applications developed to make sure they meet the needs of the ultimate user, the citizen.

The IOWAccess Advisory Council will set some priorities on what comes first. The Citizen Council could provide valuable input on the greatest need or demand from citizens.

Youngblood agreed that it is a great idea to restructure the Citizen Council differently, and would like to work with Johnson on this.

Plazak suggested that the Citizen Council could be reconstituted by adding committed people from the teams, which will disband in October. Many of the teams have also experienced waning interest as the system becomes operational, so the committed members could be asked to join the Citizen Council.

Swanson noted that the ICN allows many individuals living outside the Central Iowa area to participate in meetings, and saves travel time. Swanson asked that the ICN continue to be used for Citizen Council meetings.

Richard Rietsma suggested that some strong criteria be developed, based on the successes and failures of this pilot, to help choose the best projects in the future. The evaluation component to these project is essential, if government is to determine the most appropriate use of resources. Johnson agreed, and reinforced the need to continue assessments beyond September 30.

Next Steps

The Citizen Council agreed to meet again in September, but agreed to independently respond to reports, evaluations, and other project requests prior to the next meeting.

Adjournment

The Citizen Council adjourned at 12:55 p.m.